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IV.—THE DATE OF CICERO'S CATO MAIOR DE SENECTUTE.

It is generally agreed that Cicero's *Cato Maior* was written either shortly before or within two months after the death of Caesar.

For each view there is both internal and external evidence, or rather, perhaps, certain pieces of evidence have been interpreted in favor of each, several indeed in favor of both.

Maurer in 1884 (*Fleck-Jahrb.* 129. 386.) gave certain convincing arguments in favor of the earlier date, and Mr. F. G. Moore in the introduction to his edition of the *Cato Maior*, published in 1903, sums up briefly most of the arguments on both sides, and decides unhesitatingly in favor of that date. To his evidence on this side of the question it may not be amiss to add a couple of suggestions along the same lines.

For one of the most telling points hitherto made, the argument starts from the *Cato Maior* itself, sec. 2: *et tamen te suspicor eisdem rebus quibus me ipsum interdiu gravius commoveri. Quarum consolatio et maior est et in aliud tempus differenda; nunc autem visum est mihi de senectute aliquid ad te scribere.* Everyone agrees that the troubles here alluded to, troubles for which consolation is more difficult than for old age, are political troubles of some sort. Those who favor the earlier date of composition interpret them as the conditions existing in the state under Caesar, the advocates of the later date as the conditions under Antony after Caesar's death. For these troubles, whichever they were, Cicero hereby suggests that he may in future attempt to write a *consolatio*, as he is now writing a *consolatio* for old age. Whatever these political troubles were, then, they were of a nature to admit of consolation, and indeed of such consolation as might be presented in a formal literary treatise, based on philosophical studies.

What consolations of this sort might Cicero have found for the troubles of each of these periods? In regard to the earlier period we have a statement of his own, *de Div.* 2, 6, quoted by Mr. Maurer and Mr. Moore, and showing clearly that he had in mind

a definite line of consolation, drawn from philosophy, for the tyranny of Caesar at Rome, the fact that a one-man power might be regarded as only a normal step in the political development of the state: id enim ipsum a Platone philosophiaque didiceram naturales esse quasdam conversiones rerum publicarum, ut eae tum a principibus tenerentur, tum a populis, aliquando a singulis. Quod cum accidisset nostrae rei publicae, etc. This evidence, however, will amount to proof only if it can be shown that in the period following Caesar's death Cicero did not see or could not have seen the same possibilities of consolation for the evils then existing.

The evidence here must be looked for in Cicero's letters written between March 15th and May 11th, though probably no one would put the Cato Maior later than May 1st, even though no mention is made of it before the 11th.

The earliest of these letters (ad Fam. 6. 15), probably written on the very day of Caesar's murder, is full of exultation. In these first days of supposed liberation from tyranny, Cicero was in a mood to write a panegyric rather than a consolation for the times. There are no more letters extant till April 7th. From this date on, they come in quick succession, and they betray a constant state of doubt, and of anxiety amounting at times almost to despair, until May 1st, when Dolabella's attitude in Antony's absence gives some hope of better times. In none of these letters does there seem to be a hint of the resignation and calmness such as must have been felt, to a certain degree at least, by one who contemplates writing a *consolatio* for the evils amidst which he lives. Indeed, the conditions, varying from day to day, entirely uncertain as to final outcome, must hardly have admitted of resignation or consolation even to one of less mercurial temperament than Cicero. One can hardly feel resigned to or consoled for evils the true nature of which is not yet evident.

In only one letter, ad Att. 14, 13, 3, is there a reference to literature as a solace. This is in looking forward to future evils; nos autem id videamus * * * ut quicquid acciderit, fortiter et sapienter feramus * * * nosque cum multum litterae tum non minimum idus quoque Martiae consolentur. And even here it is not from literature, but from the "ides of March", that comfort is chiefly drawn. The "ides of March", indeed, are more than once mentioned as affording consolation (ad Att. 14, 4; 14, 6; 14, 12). But this is not the sort of consolation to be embodied in a philosophical treatise, and even this feeling of pleasure in sated hatred

fails, at times, to console, for more than once Cicero exclaims that though the tyrant is dead, tyranny still lives: *verum illis (the liberators) magna consolatio conscientia maximi et clarissimi facti, nobis quae consolatio, qui, interfecto rege, liberi non sumus?* ad Att. 14, 11, April 21. Cp. ad Att. 14, 5; 14, 9; 14, 10; 14, 14.

From the last letter here cited, moreover, it is evident that Atticus had been trying to induce Cicero to take a more cheerful view of things, and from the whole tone of this reply of Cicero's it may be gathered that its writer was in no frame of mind even to receive consolation gracefully, to say nothing of offering it to others.

Briefly then, in the months just preceding the ides of March Cicero seems to have actually found in philosophy grounds of consolation for Caesar's tyranny; after the ides of March he was at first too jubilant, later too depressed, too anxious and uncertain, to feel at the one time the necessity, at the other the possibility, of consolation.

The most important argument, however, is based on external evidence, certain passages in the second book of the *de Divinatione*. Cicero gives in the introduction to this book a list of his philosophical and rhetorical works. He clearly includes in the list the first book of the *de Divinatione*, when he says (3): *quae ut plene esset cumulateque perfecta 'de Divinatione' ingressi sumus his libris scribere*. He also includes the *Cato Maior*: *interiectus est etiam nuper liber is quem ad Atticum de senectute misimus*.

As everyone now recognizes, in this second book *de Divinatione* is indicated the change in Cicero's plans, caused by the death of Caesar, and the immediate, though short-lived, hope that he would again become an active factor in political life (sec. 7): *quod cum accidisset nostrae rei publicae (its domination by a tyrant) tum, pristinis orbatu muneribus haec studia renovare coepimus * * * Nunc quoniam de re publica consuli coepti sumus tribuenda est opera rei publicae * * * tantum huic studio relinquendum quantum vacabit a publico officio et munere*. The line of argument usually deduced from these passages is as follows: As this statement in 2, 7, is not made at the beginning of the first book, it is fair to assume that that was finished before Caesar's death. And if so, the expression *interiectus est etiam nuper* of the *Cato Maior* would most naturally mean that that work, too, was written before the death of Caesar, either just before, or during, or just after the writing of the first book *de Divinatione*.

This is true, so far as it goes. But it should be noted that these very passages have been used also as the basis of argument by those who have advocated the later date. Is it not rather on another sentence than *interiectus est* that the main stress should be laid? After this mention of the Cato Maior, Cicero adds a few more works to the list, and then goes on (sec. 4): *adhuc haec erant. Ad reliqua alacri tendebamus animo, sic parati, ut, nisi quae causa gravior obstitisset, nullum philosophiae locum esse pateremur qui non Latinis litteris illustratus pateret.* We know from sec. 7 that Cicero considered that his literary work had been seriously interrupted by the death of Caesar, in that this event involved him, as he supposed, once more in political life. May not the words *causa gravior*, then, be explained in the light of sec. 7 as referring definitely to the death of Caesar and its effect on Cicero?

There may be question as to the details of translation in this passage, but the general import of it is: the series of Cicero's philosophical works had been carried to the point indicated, including the works named, at a given time. He was going on eagerly to complete the series unless some serious obstacle had prevented. Even if *nisi quae causa gravior obstitisset* must be interpreted as a future condition from a past standpoint, it is reasonable to suppose that in introducing these words Cicero had in mind the same obstacle to which he alludes explicitly in sec. 7; that interruption which, however we interpret *causa gravior*, did actually occur before the writing of both these passages. This interruption is hinted at in *causa gravior* (4), explained as the death of Caesar in *nunc * * * rei publicae* (7), and in (4) the *adhuc haec erant* following the list of Cicero's works sums up the works written before the interruption in contrast to what may in the future be done, as in (7) *haec studia * * * coepimus, and philosophiam * * * putabamus* allude to works written before Caesar's death in contrast to the uncertainties of future literary work implied in *nunc * * * munere*.

If this interpretation be right, there can be no question that the Cato Maior, included as it is in the list summed up in *adhuc haec erant*, was written before the death of Caesar occurred to interrupt the series of Cicero's philosophical works.